

Resource Protection Subcommittee Issue Document

Committee Members

Rick Leaumont – Chair

Frank Brock

Rex Buck

Nancy Craig

Michele Gerber

David Geist

Jim Stevens

LaMar Trego

Background Statement

The mission of the National Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans. The Hanford Reach National Monument (HRNM) is also home to unique and rich historic and cultural resources, aesthetic and geologic resources, and it is a place of serenity where natural visual and audible resources need to be protected. These resources and qualities should be protected, as well as the resources called out in the Refuge Improvement Act of 1997.

Committee Statement

Protecting the diversity of Monument resources is a primary focus, and will require in-depth analyses and thoughtful consideration of many aspects of resource management. Natural resource management decisions will be made using the best available science, and will include considerations of Native American traditional and cultural uses, and other historical values.

Issues

- **Protect and Enhance Species in the River, Riparian, and Upland Areas.** The Hanford Reach National Monument encompasses several remnant communities and habitats that when considered in their totality, are not found elsewhere in the Columbia River mainstem: free-flowing river; riparian (streamside) systems; sandstone bluffs; upland shrub-steppe communities; and floodplain lakes and wetlands. The HRNM thus comprises not only the river itself but also the surrounding terrestrial landscape with the riparian zone forming the primary connection between the two. The protection and enhancement of species on the HRNM will require managing these three habitat types as a contiguous ecosystem.
- **Protection of the Monument for and through Research and Education.** The Hanford Reach National Monument ecosystem comes as close to meeting the criteria of an intact ecosystem as any other landscape of its type in the Columbia River Basin. Consequently, it serves as an outdoor laboratory where ecosystem functions and processes can be studied, e.g., the interaction between riparian and upland ecological zones. Preserving the species and habitats within the HRNM for purposes of research and education will have far-reaching benefits to generations to come through expansion of our scientific knowledge.

- **Balancing Public Recreational Use with Protection.** The Refuge Improvement Act of 1997 and Hanford Reach National Monument Proclamation call for the protection of resources for present and future generations. Inherent in these mandates is the tension of use and protection. The impacts of hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, and other recreation activities should not be contrary to efforts to protect plant and animal species, habitats, historic properties, and cultural resources. Allowable public uses should be compatible with the long-term protection of the resources identified in the Monument Proclamation and other resources that may be identified through CCP development. The CCP should identify management opportunities to promote public use and enjoyment of game and non-game species, habitats, and viewsheds when such use is compatible with resource protection.
- **Protection of Native Biota.** The HRNM contains some of the best shrub-steppe habitat, as well as riparian and island complex habitat in eastern Washington. The Nature Conservancy biological inventory of Hanford identified 48 species of plants and insects previously unknown to science. The CCP/EIS should provide for the protection and enhancement of this habitat with the aim of achieving sustainable populations of all native plants and insects.
- **Resource Monitoring.** A comprehensive monitoring program should be instituted to provide early detection, a timely adaptive management response and mitigation of impacts to the resources.
- **Protection and Enhancement of Viewshed Integrity.** As eastern Washington agriculture and urban areas continue to expand, the HRNM's natural vistas become more and more precious. The panoramic views across Hanford from Rattlesnake Mountain, Saddle Mountain or the highlands along the eastern shore of the Columbia north of Ringgold are of particular value. Here we have one of the few places in eastern Washington where one can scan from horizon to horizon with only negligible evidence of human impact. The CCP/EIS should strive to preserve these viewsheds by minimizing intrusions and encouraging the use of technology and architecture to minimize the impact on the landscape.
- **Fire Management.** Prevention and providing for a quick, effective response to fire should be the principals that govern fire management. Planning and a clear understanding of command authority should be established and communicated among all federal, state and local fire protection agencies. The various fire protection agencies should practice their plans through "war gaming" exercises to test their ability to effectively respond to fire emergencies. Personnel and equipment requirements should be identified and provided for without delay.
- **Cleanup and Restoration.** Large amounts of land designated for inclusion in the Monument are undergoing cleanup by the Department of Energy. Other lands have been damaged by fire and erosion, and could be damaged still further by these causes in the future. In cases where it is necessary to undertake restoration, restoration decisions and practices should protect native plants, soils, species, and other components of habitat, and should return the land to its natural state insofar as possible. The HRNM was designated to protect a rare ecosystem. Therefore, restoration should proceed with careful thought, research and dedication in order to reinstate, preserve and protect the original, natural conditions.

- **Operation and Maintenance of Utility Facilities.** Operation and maintenance of existing utility facilities on the HRNM is protected by the Proclamation¹. This includes electric utility and irrigation facilities. Management of these facilities and the related service roads and rights-of-ways has the potential to impact vegetative, visual, and other resources. The CCP should identify mechanisms to integrate utility facility management into resource protection plans, e.g. integrated pest management practices, minimizing areas where service vehicles travel. The CCP should also acknowledge the flexibility needed to respond to emergencies associated with facilities on the HRNM.
- **Management Actions Impact Shrub-Steppe Habitat.** The CCP/EIS should recognize that shrub-steppe habitat in eastern Washington is disappearing at an alarming rate. The CCP/EIS should treat the HRNM as a baseline example of natural shrub-steppe habitat. Preserving this baseline example will assist in land management decisions throughout eastern Washington and provide a source of fish, wildlife, native plants and insects for reintroduction into other areas.
- **Protecting Cultural and Historic Resources** (recognizing that in certain cases protection can be enhanced by use). The existence of rare, unique and irreplaceable historic and cultural resources in the HRNM is one of the core reasons that the HRNM was designated. These resources must be protected from destruction. However, protection should not always be identified with placing the resources off limits to public visitation and access. Different resources need different types of protection. For some sacred cultural spaces, extremely limited access (essentially no public access) is appropriate. For certain historic resources such as the B-Reactor, access partners with protection, because limiting public access diverges with primary tenets of public ownership and education. A wide range of protection levels should be implemented for the varied historic and cultural resources of the HRNM.
- **Solitude and Tranquility.** Solitude and tranquility are among the most fragile and precious resources of the HRNM. Solitude and tranquility are difficult to define and consequently difficult to manage and protect. Protecting solitude and tranquility should be a conscientious part of the planning process and a factor in all land use decisions.
- **Law Enforcement**
The purpose of law enforcement is to minimize the adverse impact on the HRNM in relation to the flora, fauna, and cultural resources. To effectively achieve such a large task, the number of enforcement personnel should be sufficient to achieve the task.

Law enforcement on the Hanford Reach National Monument is a vital and complex issue. The agency in charge should firmly and fairly enforce all laws and regulations applicable to protecting the public safety and resources of the HRNM. Law enforcement officers of the USF&WS and US Department of Energy should coordinate and cooperate with state and local law enforcement agencies. Law enforcement officers on the HRNM should seek to engage the public in protecting the

¹ Nothing in this proclamation shall interfere with the operation and maintenance of existing facilities of the Columbia Basin Reclamation Project, The Federal Columbia River Transmission System, or other existing utility services that are located within the monument.

HRNM, promoting safety and encouraging a sense of ownership and stewardship among all interest groups.

- **Protecting Air Quality.** The HRNM's spectacular viewshed is entirely dependent upon maintaining high air quality. The CCP/EIS should strive to reduce dust, control fire and other sources of pollution to help protect air quality.
- **Impact of Offsite Activities on Monument Resources.** The HRNM is not an island unto itself, but is an integral part of the eastern Washington landscape. Offsite activities such as water uses, land use decisions, urban, industrial and agricultural developments impact air quality, stream flows, as well as fish, wildlife and native plant populations on the HRNM. The CCP/EIS should recognize that offsite activities could impact the HRNM and identify the processes, statutory and administrative, available to government and the public for dealing with these impacts.
- **Protecting water quality and quantity.** Protection and enhancement of fish spawning and rearing areas as well as plant and animal habit in the riparian and island complex are highly dependent upon both water quality and streamflow quantity and variability. Working within the constraint of existing water use and water rights the CCP/EIS needs to address the actions and policies that will be needed to manage the important streamflow and water quality issues.